

GREENSBORO PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION MEETING

Wednesday, August 13, 2008 – 6:00pm
Smith Senior Center – 2401 Fairview Street

PRESENT: John Beaman, Jr., Paul Brown, Ken Free, Lori Galbreath, Rose Marie Ponton

ABSENT: Marc Bush, David Hoggard

STAFF PRESENT: Candice Bruton, Derek Dunn, Cindy Hipp, Bonnie Kuester, Pat Falls, Dan Maxson, Weesie Person, Marcie Richardson, Elizabeth Sapp, Mike Simpson, Laurie Thore, Bernadette White, Chris Wilson

OTHERS: Bob Morgan (Deputy City Manager), Butch Shumate (Facilities and Engineering)

The regular meeting of the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Commission was held at Smith Senior Center. Rose Marie Ponton called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the July 9, 2008 Commission Meeting were approved as submitted with the before mentioned changes prior to the meeting.

Recognition

Bonnie Kuester, Director, recognized the Parks and Recreation August Employee of the Month, Derek Dunn.

Smith Senior Center Presentation

Cindy Hipp, Seniors Coordinator, presented the Commission with historical information about Smith Center and programs currently held there.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

- NONE -

OLD BUSINESS

War Memorial Stadium

Butch Shumate, Construction Projects Manager, reported that in 2006 voters turned down the 5.5 million dollar bond referendum to be used towards repairs to War Memorial Stadium. Staff then had to identify funding for cosmetic repairs in order to buy some time until additional funding was available. Cosmetic repairs and coatings were done to try to stop or slow down deterioration.

The original designer, Walter Robbs Callahan & Pierce, which the War Memorial Stadium Taskforce worked with, was asked to return to provide assistance. This designer suggested Sutton-Kennerly and Associates, construction engineers, who completed the initial assessment in 2003, return and look at what concerns the designer had. Sutton-Kennerly and Associates said coatings and patch repairs would not do any good and that the degradation of the concrete was to the point that it is steadily increasing over time. The Ph balance in concrete typically protects the steel that reinforces the center of the concrete. The construction method in the 1920's was not up to today's standards. When the steel in the concrete erodes it causes the concrete to expand and chip off in places around the area. When the concrete expands the steel becomes thinner and will no longer allow the reinforcement for the structure. Sutton-Kennerly and Associates conducted structural testing and reported the problems areas, such as the coating of the exterior facade, which is not the original coating. The façade is peeling and allowing water to get behind it and penetrate the coating causing it to peel off. Concrete areas on top of the two towers were of much

concern. Staff made repairs to those areas and to the steel rebar in the four main columns that hold the canopy in place so it is now stabilized. The seating area was also a concern and is to the point that if coated it would only last a year.

Shumate continued stating that Sutton-Kennerly and Associates recommend in their report to return to the original idea of the taskforce and demolish the entire left field side as it is beyond repair and not economical to spend money on this area. They also suggest demolishing a portion of the bleachers on the right field side. This suggestion would allow 10-15 years maximum use of the stadium at a cost of 3-4 million dollars. They also suggest a more viable and economical option to save the towers and entrance arches in front of the stadium and demolish the other areas. They also suggest gutting the interior of the stadium and replacing with masonry walls. Other suggestions include having structural steel seating or aluminum riser seating, build free standing masonry walls around the restrooms, build a free standing locker room area for the home team and renovate the existing visitor's locker room.

Sutton-Kennerly and Associates state in their report more demolishing could be done than in the original plan and there would be a different style seating. Air conditioning was also considered. This plan would also allow 10-15 years of usage. Staff is estimating a 5-6 million dollar range to make these type repairs.

Shumate stated that this is where the stadium issue stands today and the longer concrete is exposed the more deterioration and repairs will be needed.

A citizen in attendance asked if it is correct that the first option would be to retain a good portion of the existing original concrete seating which is the less expensive option and that Sutton-Kennerly and Associates reports this would extend the life of the stadium 10-15 years.

Shumate replied stating yes and that this would allow approximately 1500 seats.

The citizen then asked if it is correct that the second more expensive option would be to demolish all of the existing seating.

Shumate replied stating yes and that the concrete risers have many penetrations and the deterioration is causing the steel to crack. Patches completed by Building Maintenance can be seen by going underneath through the tunnels. While making the patches Building Maintenance noticed that the infield masonry walls are not structural and are settling on the inside hallways near the office and exterior facade. It is not known how much settling has taken place and this issue will have to be addressed. The second option would allow approximately 1,000 seats.

Another citizen from the audience inquired regarding the second option of removing everything and replacing the front façade. The citizen wanted to know if the current look would be replicated so that it maintains the 1920's historical view. The citizen also inquired if the same historical feel would be considered upon entering the stadium and would any of the taskforce design efforts be integrated as part of the renovation process.

Shumate stated that the current coating is not the original coating and the renovation process would include trying to match the original concrete. Under option one, when walking into the lobby area, it would still have the feel and integrity of the stadium and some of the taskforce suggestions would be used.

A citizen inquired what would happen to the existing seating, which is also historic, if demolished. The stadium's J shape is under the National Registry for Historic Places and there are various proposals for retaining some memory of that shape.

Shumate responded saying that Sutton-Kennerly and Associates suggested that it may be less costly to tear down the canopy and rebuild it. The canopy is not bolted and is constructed by rivets. The rivets would have to be cut in order to take it apart. There have been discussions of taking down the canopy, removing the lead paint, placing a new roof

on it, and then putting it back up. The roof is 20 years old. Another option is to cut the main supports and lift it off in one piece, place it in the parking lot to refurbish it, and then put it back up. We would try to keep the J shape.

A citizen stated that this seems to be a premier opportunity for Greensboro's city and foundation leaders to follow through with their many promises in 2003 that War Memorial Stadium be preserved and repaired. The citizen inquired what support has been offered or will be requested from foundations in Greensboro from who all made public pronouncements in 2003-04 that they would be very supportive of efforts to renovate or restore the stadium.

Ponton stated that this is a good suggestion and measures will be taken to see what procedures will need to take place and what will need to be done if these foundations are still interested.

Bob Morgan, Deputy City Manager, stated that this is a very preliminary part of the process. A bond package was voted on and the community didn't support the idea. That put the city in a situation for what to do next because the stadium had to be repaired. It is uncertain exactly what the plan will be but wanted to share the information so the public is informed. The primary issue is where funding will come from. Funding for the previous project came from the 2/3 bond fund. Dialogue regarding this issue will continue. A presentation will be made to City Council at their upcoming briefing. We have not approached foundations and it is certainly a good idea.

An inquiry came from a member of the audience asking what impact will take place at the tennis facility located at the stadium during construction.

Kuester replied that no indication has been given that there would be any long period of time that it could not be used. Currently, there is no reason to believe that operation would continue unless there are safety concerns. Kuester stated that the stadium host approximately 250 games annually.

David Wharton, 6667 Percy Street, stated that he served on the War Memorial Stadium Taskforce and is currently the Vice-Chair of the Greensboro Historic Preservation Commission, although not speaking on their behalf. Wharton commended the Commission and staff on dealing with the recreation issues involving the stadium, but there are two other important issues. One is historic preservation. The stadium is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It's not just the façade that has historic significance, it's the entire stadium. Wharton believes the stadium is in danger of staying on the National Register of Historic Places. There are a number of historical features that look as though they're going to be lost. The J shape of the stadium tells an important story about Greensboro of what was involved in raising the funds to build the stadium. From a preservation standpoint Wharton stated that he can not support the demolition of that structure. He believes it would be a loss of one of Greensboro's most historic and significant structures. Wharton urged the Commission, the City of Greensboro and Foundations to retain as much of this stadium as possible as it is one of the few remaining functional baseball stadiums of its era that serves as a war memorial. There were a number of stadiums built in the early 1920's after the first World War and most no longer remain and have been destroyed which makes this one more worthy of keeping. Wharton quoted what the Mayor of Greensboro said on Armistice Day in 1926 when he dedicated the stadium.

Betsy Vaughn, 114 Cypress Street, stated that she served on the taskforce and until last week was president of her neighborhood for four years. Vaughn urged the Commission to listen to what the previous speaker said as he makes the point very clearly and that we have a national treasure right here in our city. It's up to us to keep that treasure.

Ponton thanked everyone for coming and expressing their concerns and hopes that good things will happen for everyone and to continue their support for Greensboro.

Bond Referendum Update

Candice Bruton, Planning and Project Development Manager, stated that the Commission received an email since the last meeting regarding the outcome of the determination of the bond package that will go on the referendum in November. Part of the 20 million dollar package is a regional competitive aquatic center. This 50 meter venue

would also serve as a local venue for public aquatics, water aerobics, and other aquatic activities. A warm up pool is also proposed along with spectator seating, and other amenities such as restrooms, concessions, etc.

Bruton continued stating that athletic field development is also a part of the package, including artificial turf at Hester Park. Also included are park reinvestments for improvements at Smith Senior Center to install an ADA accessible entrance on the north side of the building, paving of the gravel parking, a practice field would be developed for Senior Games, a shelter would be built and a walking trail. Neighborhood Park renovations are included costing \$310,575. Several parks have been identified for upgrades. A public input process would take place seeking public comment about what activities and elements would be preferred in their neighborhood park.

Pool repairs will be a part of the package costing almost \$650,000. Facility investments at 4.2 million dollars would include the Gateway Gardens Phase II. This would work towards the completion of Gateway Gardens at one million dollars. Barber Park Master Plan Implementation Phase II is included and would further the Master Plan that was developed in 2003. Should this bond pass the department would once again seek public input since it has been some time since we revisited this particular park. A restroom at Gillespie Golf Course at \$200,000 is included. There currently is not a restroom on the course.

Bruton stated there will be more information forthcoming before November.

Ponton stated that as we begin to celebrate the 75th Anniversary it is obvious the department is to the point where it needs quite a bit of refurbishing.

Nominating Committee Report

Due to the absence of the Commission Chair, this item was postponed until the next Commission meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

- NONE -

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

- NONE -

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Kuester thanked the citizens for their involvement and comments. The department needs citizen guidance and the Commission is in the role of hearing from our citizens and informing staff of concerns. The department is very fortunate to have the support of citizens who have been generous with their time, money, property, enthusiasm, and creative ideas over the years to make this one of the leading departments in the nation which has been recognized on three occasions by being awarded the gold medal.

Kuester stated that this fall begins the department's 75th Anniversary. Kuester invited the Commission to be a part of the upcoming celebrations.

Kuester stated that on September 25, 2008 at 1:00pm a fundraising golf tournament will be held at Bryan Park's Champion Course for the Greensboro Parks and Recreation Friends Foundation. Kuester encouraged anyone who would like to participate to register.

Kuester thanked the Commission for their involvement with the Citizen Board Member (CBM) Forum.

Kuester announced that Carl Bower, former Commissioner, has been reappointed by City Council to serve on the Parks and Recreation Commission.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

Paul Brown stated that there were many good sessions at the CBM Forum. The forum was educational, enlightening and very beneficial to board members.

Ken Free stated that one of the things recognized as Parks and Recreation professionals all around the state is how important Parks and Recreation becomes when our country is in economic stress. The department is impacted more by people staying at home wanting something to do and it emphasizes the importance of recreation employees. There is a bond across the state to hang in there and make sure services are provided to citizens.

John Beaman, Jr. stated that when working for the city he worked in the same position as Butch Shumate. There was not a taskforce for the stadium, but studies were being conducted by Sutton -Kennerly and Associates. Unfortunately the situation has not improved. Citizens have turned this issue down twice and if 5 million dollars is going to be used towards the stadium it is going to be vital and important that the public perceives public/private cooperation for this project.

Lori Galbreath offered accolades to the Parks and Recreation team for their efforts regarding the CBM Forum. Bernadette White was given special recognition for her leadership efforts with the CBM Forum. Galbreath also offered accolades to Marcie Richardson for her efforts with the Commission.

Rose Marie Ponton also commended Richardson for her efforts with the Commission. Ponton stated that the CBM Forum was a great conference and commended White on her efforts. This was the 29th year of the forum and it has been held in Greensboro each year.

With no further business Ponton adjourned the meeting at 6:59 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marcie Richardson, Executive Assistant
Greensboro Parks and Recreation